

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1257

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PLO, LE, IS, PEPR  
SUBJ: COMMENTS OF AN NAHAR EDITOR MICHEL ABU JAWDEH ON THE  
PALESTINIANS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO AN NAHAR EDITOR MICHEL ABU JAWDEH, YASIR ARAFAT RECENTLY SAID THAT A) ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS AND AN ISRAELI MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE WEST BANK WERE NOT FUNDAMENTAL OBSTACLES TO PEACE; B) THE FUNDAMENTAL OBSTACLE WAS ISRAEL'S REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR A FORMAL PALESTINIAN ENTITY; AND C) THE PLO STILL PREFERRED A DIPLOMATIC TO A TERRORIST OPTION AND WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT HAFIZ AL ASAD, KING HUSSEIN OR WEST BANK RESIDENTS TO REPRESENT THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN A NEGOTIATING PROCESS. ABU JAWDEH ALSO THOUGHT THAT LEBANON COULD ABSORB ALL THE PALESTINIANS HERE FROM AN ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW AND EVEN ACCEPT THEIR PERMANENT PRESENCE IF THEY WERE FORMALLY GRANTED THEIR OWN NATIONALITY. END SUMMARY.

2. ON MARCH 7 VISITING AMCONSUL JERUSALEM OFFICER HULL, VISITING AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS OFFICER DAVIS, AND BEIRUT EMBOFF CALLED ON  
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AN NAHAR EDITOR MICHEL ABU JAWDEH AND L'ORIENT LE-JOUR EDITOR PIERRE EDDE. ABU JAWDEH, WHO DID MOST OF THE TALKING, SAID HE HAD RECENTLY MET WITH YASIR ARAFAT, WHO HAD OFFERED THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:  
-- ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ON THE WEST BANK WERE NOT IN THEMSELVES AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE. THE PLO COULD ACCEPT THEM PERMANENTLY AS PART OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY. NOR WAS AN ISRAELI MILITARY

PRESENCE ON THE WEST BANK AN INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE. THE PLO COULD ACCEPT ONE FOR PERHAPS FIVE TO SEVEN YEARS.

-- THE KEY ISSUE WAS FORMAL RECOGNITION OF AN ENTITY THAT WOULD GIVE THE PALESTINIANS A POLITICAL IDENTITY. IF THE ISRAELIS GRANTED THIS, THE OTHER PROBLEMS COULD BE DEALT WITH. SUCH AN ENTITY COULD TAKE MANY FORMS; IT COULD BE LINKED WITH JORDAN, FOR EXAMPLE.

-- THE PLO DID NOT OBJECT TO ISRAEL'S DEALING DIRECTLY WITH THE RESIDENTS OF THE WEST BANK. ISRAEL HAD, HOWEVER, SO FAR REFUSED TO DEAL SERIOUSLY WITH THEM. (EDDE EXPLAINED THAT THIS MEANT THE ISRAELIS HAD REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE NECESSITY OF RECOGNIZING A PALESTINIAN IDENTITY.)

-- IN EARLY NOVEMBER 1977 PRESIDENT SADAT HAD SHOWN ARAFAT A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER THAT SAID THE UNITED STATES HAD DONE AS MUCH AS IT COULD TO BRING ABOUT A PEACE SETTLEMENT. IT WAS AFTER RECEIVING THIS LETTER THAT SADAT HAD LAUNCHED HIS PEACE INITIATIVE.

-- IT APPEARED INITIALLY THAT THE SADAT INITIATIVE WOULD HAVE CONCRETE RESULTS, AND DESPITE PUBLIC CRITICISM THE PLO HAD PRIVATELY INDICATED IT WAS WILLING TO HELP SADAT. NOW IT APPEARED THE SADAT INITIATIVE WOULD LEAD NOWHERE.

3. ABU JAWDEH THOUGHT THAT AS A RESULT THE PLO NOW FACED A FUNDAMENTAL DECISION. IT WOULD EITHER HAVE TO OPT FOR EXTREME TERRORISM OR DECIDE TO HAVE SOMEONE REPRESENT THE PLO IN A BARGAINING PROCESS. YASIR ARAFAT HAD TOLD ABU JAWDEH THAT HE CONFIDENTIAL

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PREFERRED THE LATTER ALTERNATIVE AND WAS WILLING TO HAVE HAFIZ AL ASAD, KING HUSSEIN OR WEST BANK PALESTINIANS REPRESENT THE PLO AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. NEVERTHELESS, ABU JAWDEH COMMENTED, IT WAS UP TO THE UNITED STATES TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS TO MAKE THEM REALIZE THEY MUST RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR A FORMAL PALESTINIAN ENTITY.

4. ABU JAWDEH NOTED THAT HE HAD SEEN PRINCE FAHD RECENTLY IN RIYADH. ABU JAWDEH HAD EXPRESSED PESSIMISM ABOUT AMERICA'S ABILITY TO WORK TOWARD AN EQUITABLE PEACE SETTLEMENT. FAHD HAD REMARKED THAT THE PLANNED SALE OF FIGHTER AIRCRAFT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT SHOWED THAT THERE WAS STILL SOME REASON TO PLACE HOPE IN WASHINGTON. FAHD HAD COUNSELLED PATIENCE AND SAID THE PROCESS OF PEACE MIGHT TAKE A LONG TIME.

5. TURNING TO LEBANON, JAWDEH SAID (AND EDDE AGREED) THAT VERY FEW PALESTINIANS WOULD LEAVE LEBANON EVEN IF THERE WERE AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. LEBANON COULD ABSORB ALL THE PALESTINIANS NOW IN LEBANON AND EVEN MORE FROM AN ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW. THE PROBLEM WAS POLITICAL. LEBANON COULD ACCEPT A PERMANENT PALESTINIAN PRESENCE, PROVIDED THE PALESTINIANS WERE FORMALLY GIVEN THEIR OWN NATIONALITY AND CARRIED DOCUMENTS

WHICH MADE CLEAR THAT THEY WERE NOT LEBANESE CITIZENS. IN THIS CASE, THE PALESTINIANS WOULD BE JUST LIKE SYRIANS AND OTHER FOREIGN WORKERS IN LEBANON.

6. COMMENT. PALESTINIAN PUBLIC STATEMENTS AS CARRIED BY Wafa HAVE: A) NOT SUGGESTED THE PLO WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS OR AN ISRAELI MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE WEST BANK; B) ALSO NOT SUGGESTED THAT THE PLO WAS PREPARED TO DESIGNATE ASAD, HUSSEIN OR WEST BANK RESIDENTS TO REPRESENT THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE; AND C) AFFIRMED THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD CONSIDER LINKS WITH JORDAN ONLY AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. ARAFAT DOUBTLESS REALIZES ABU JAWDEH HAS WIDE CONTACTS AMONG WESTERN JOURNALISTS AND DIPLOMATS AND MAY HAVE TAILORED HIS COMMENTS WITH THE INTENTION THAT  
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THEY BE PASSED ON. ABU JAWDEH MAY ALSO HAVE DISTORTED ARAFAT'S REMARKS TO TELL US WHAT HE THINKS WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR.  
PARKER

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## Message Attributes

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